By WALLACE BRUCE

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WASHINGTON IRVING
BORN
APRIL 3, 1783.
DIED
NOV. 28, 1859.

THE HUDSON

BY

WALLACE BRUCE

ILLUSTRATED BY ALFRED FREDERICKS

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TO

THE MEMORY OF

WASHINGTON IRVING

This Poem

IS

LOVINGLY DEDICATED

THE HUDSON.

Morning.

I. The Catskills.

II. The Adirondacks.

III. The Highlands.

IV. Tappan Zee.

Evening.

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THE HUDSON.

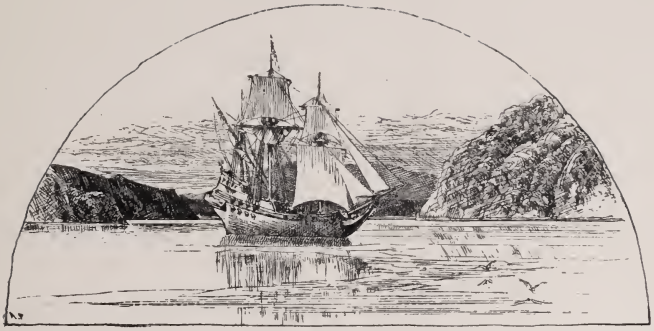
MORNING.

Gray streaks of dawn are faintly seen;
The stars of half their light are shorn;
The Hudson, with its banks of green,
Lies tranquil in the early morn.

The earth and sky breathe sacred rest,
A holy peace too sweet to break,
A spell like that divine behest
Which stilled the Galilean lake.

The circling hills, with foreheads fair,
  Await with joy the crowning rays;
All nature bows in grateful prayer,
  The templed groves respond with praise.

Ye trembling shafts of glorious light,
  Dart from the east with arrowy gleam;
Cleave the dark shield of fleeing Night,
  And slay her with your golden beam.



Cities and hamlets, up and down
  This level highway to the sea,
Along the banks sit gray and brown,
  Dim shadows musing dreamily.

Adown the river sloops and ships
  Float slowly with the lazy tide;
And round the bluff a paddle dips,
  Where once the storm-ship used to ride.

The vision widens as the morn
  Sweeps through the portals of the day;
Purple and rosy mists adorn
  Mountain and hill-top far away.

I. The Catskills.

The Catskills to the northward rise,
With massive swell and towering crest, —
The old-time "mountains of the skies,"
The threshold of eternal rest :

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Where Manitou once lived and reigned,
  Great Spirit of a race gone by ;
And Ontiora lies enchained,
  With face uplifted to the sky.

The dream-land, too, of later days,
  Where Rip Van Winkle slept in peace,
Wrapped up in deep poetic haze,
  A twenty years of sweet release.

Ay, burning years! a nation's forge!
  To wake to freedom grown to more ;
To find another painted "George"
  Above the old familiar door.

Through summer heat and winter snow,
  Beside that rushing mountain stream,
Just how he slept we cannot know ;
  Perhaps 't was all a pleasant dream.

Mayhap in many a wintry squall,
  Or howling blast, or blinding storm,
He thought he heard Dame Gretchen's call,
  And that sufficed to keep him warm ;

Or else that flagon's wondrous draught,
Distilled in some weird elfin-land,
Drawn from the keg old Hendrick quaffed,
And shared by all his silent band.

O legends full of life and health,
That live when records fail and die,
Ye are the Hudson's richest wealth,
The frondage of her history!

II. The Adirondacks.

And musing here this quiet morn,
I call up pictures, far away,
Of fountains where thy wave is born,
Of rills that in deep shadows play;

Of forest, trail, and lake, and stream,
Rich poems bound in green and gold,
Whose leaves reflect the autumn gleam,
Ere summer months are growing old;

Of camp-fires bright with dancing flame,
Where dreams and visions floated free,
And Rosalind with Annie's name
Interpreted the dreams to me.

Lake Avalanche, with rocky wall,
And Henderson's dark-wooded shore,
Your echoes linger still, and call
Unto my soul for evermore!

Tahawas, rising stern and grand,
"Cloud-Sunderer," lift thy forehead high,
Guard well thy sun-kissed mountain land,
Whose lakes seem borrowed from the sky.

O Hudson, mountain-born and free,
Thy youth a deep impression takes,
For, mountain-guarded to the sea,
Thy course is but a chain of lakes.

III. The Highlands.

And not alone thy features fair,
  And legend lore and matchless grace,
But noble deeds of courage rare
  Illume, as with a soul, thy face.

The Highlands and the Palisades
  Mirror their beauty in the tide,
The history of whose forest shades
  A nation reads with conscious pride.

On either side these mountain glens
  Lie open like a massive book,
Whose words were graved with iron pens,
  And lead into the eternal rock:

Which evermore shall here retain
  The annals time cannot erase,
And while these granite leaves remain
  This crystal ribbon marks the place.

The spot where Kosciusko dreamed,
  Fort Putnam's gray and ruined wall,
West Point, where patriot bayonets gleamed, —
  This open page reveals them all.

From Stony Point to Bemis Height,
  From Saratoga to the sea,
We trace the lines, now dark, now bright,
  From seventy-six to eighty-three.

We celebrate our hundredth year
  With thankful hearts and words of praise,
And learn a lasting lesson here
  Of trust and hope for coming days.

IV. Tappan Zee.

And sweet to me this other thought,
  And more than fancy to my mind, —
These grand divisions, plainly wrought,
  In human life a semblance find:

The Adirondacks, childhood's glee;
  The Catskills, youth with dreams o'ercast;
The Highlands, manhood bold and free;
  The Tappan Zee, age come at last.

O Tappan Zee, with peaceful hills,
And slumbrous sky, and drowsy air,
Thy calm and restful spirit stills
The heart weighed down with weary care!

Pocantico's hushed waters glide
Through Sleepy Hollow's haunted ground,
And whisper to the listening tide
The name carved o'er one lowly mound.

Fair mansions rise on every hill,
With turrets crowned and stately towers,
Which men can buy and sell at will,
But old Van Tassel's home is ours:

A quiet, cozy little nest,
Enshrined and loved for evermore;
Where Geoffrey Crayon came to rest,
When all his wanderings were o'er.

Thrice blest and happy Tappan Zee,
Whose banks along thy glistening tide
Have legend, truth, and poetry
Sweetly expressed in Sunnyside!

EVENING.

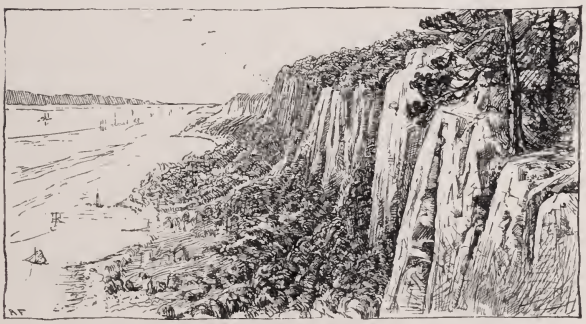
The twilight falls, the picture fades;
  My soul has drifted down the stream;
And now beneath the Palisades
  I wonder, "Is it all a dream?"

Below the cliffs Manhattan's spires
  Glint back the sunset's latest beam;
The bay is flecked with twinkling fires,
  Or is it but "Van Kortlandt's dream"?

Hark! Freedom's arms ring far and wide;
Again these forts with beacons gleam;
Loud cannon roar on every side,—
I start, I wake, I did but dream.

Deep silence 'mid these glorious hills;
Dark shadows on the silver stream;
My very soul with rapture thrills,
"Is 't heaven or earth, or but a dream?"

Nay! true as life, and deep as love,
And real amidst the things that seem;
For earth below and Heaven above
Proclaim "truth stranger than a dream."



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